

Michael Manning

Bringing Spirituality Down to Earth

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ISBN # 978-0-9687760-1-8

Printed in the U.S.A.

By Third Millenium Publishing

<http://3mpub.com>

First publication edited by Colleen Anderson

Second publication edited by Karen Pargas

Cover art by Michael Fink

Author photo by Karen Pargas

Cover design by Michael Manning

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Acknowledgements

There are many people who contributed their skills, ideas, and inspiration to help me write this book.

I would like to begin by thanking Harold Klemp, Paul Twitchell, and all the other spiritual adepts who have guided and inspired me for as long as I can remember. Without their help, this book would simply not exist.

My thanks also go to Colleen Anderson and Karen Pargas for their superb editing and Michael Fink for his beautiful cover art.

I am very fortunate to have a family who continually support and encourage my writing career. For help with this book and other projects, I would like to thank my mother, Frankie; my father, Stan; my sister, Judi; my brother-in-law, Jim; my brother, Garry; and my sister-in-law, Linda.

I would also like to thank the friends who made suggestions that helped tremendously in the re-writing and editing of this manuscript: Bruce Wozny, Terry Cooper, Heidi Wenzel, Doug Denslow, Linda Tarras, Robbin Gabriel, and Ed Busby.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Karen, for her endless love, acceptance, patience, and support.

Foreword

If you believe that spirituality is available to all who want it in their hearts, keep reading. This book is for you.

Our minds, emotions, and physical bodies are wonderful tools with which to explore life, but the greatest asset we have is our spiritual ability to directly perceive reality.

The purpose of this book is to address major topics of human concern from a spiritual point of view. When seeming complexities are stripped away from a subject, what remains is simple truth.

Truth is like a soft, warm rain that falls on everyone. When we set aside our umbrellas – everything that prevents us from seeing the truth – all the waters of heaven will be ours for the asking.

Introduction

Looking at life through spiritual eyes gives us the clearest vision.

I do not mean through religious eyes.

Throughout history, wars have been fought and atrocities committed, all in the name of religious differences. The meaningless rituals and dogma of the major religions often camouflage underlying spiritual truth.

There are, however, a few religions – most relatively unknown at this time – that have focused on a more direct path to genuine spirituality. One of these, in particular, has helped me enormously.

Nonetheless, the purpose of this book is to examine pure spiritual truth, without reference to any specific religion. In the end, each of us must follow our intuition and our hearts to wherever they may lead us.

It is my own spiritual revelations that have provided the material for this book. I realize, however, that *my experiences prove nothing to others*. Therefore, I have included a chapter on spiritual exercises. The daily practice of these exercises – or similar ones that work for you – will bring direct proof of the secrets which underlie all authentic spirituality.

As you read on, you may get tired of hearing me repeatedly emphasize the importance of spiritual exercises. I do not apologize for this. The reason is simple: *We need to have our own experiences*. No matter how much knowledge we gather from others, in the end, it is our own experiences that count.

While attending university during the 1970s, I heard a man being interviewed on the radio. He was asked if he believed in God, and he replied, “No. I *know* God.”

At that moment, I realized he was right. Belief does not matter. It is what we *know* that counts. And the only way we can know anything is through direct, personal experience.

Therefore, I find it best to divide life into what I know and don't know, rather than what I believe and don't believe. If I do not know something, I don't say, “I do not believe that.” I simply say, “I don't know at this time. Maybe it is true, maybe not, but I will keep an open mind and heart until I know from my own experience.” To absorb the most from this book, I encourage you to adopt a similar attitude.

Hearing that radio interview was a turning point in my life. It started me on a journey of asking a lot of questions and, little by little, finding many answers. I now feel ready to share some of these answers with you.

The next chapter deals with reincarnation and karma. It is important to present these topics

first because they lay a vital groundwork for subsequent chapters. If I had not personally experienced some of my past lives and observed how they are affecting me today, I would not have written this book.

As the book progresses, I move from topics which most people would consider directly spiritual to more down-to-earth material. In this way, it is my intention to demonstrate that *all of life* can be seen from a spiritual perspective.

Everyone must find their own truth. Aristotle once said of his beloved teacher Plato that, "Both truth and Plato are dear to me, but I reserve the right to prefer truth!"

I hope you will benefit from what you read in these pages, and best wishes in your spiritual quest, wherever it may take you.

1. Reincarnation and Karma

Why is one baby born into a life of war, poverty and disease, while another enters an environment of health, love, and prosperity?

This was one of the most important questions I encountered at the beginning of my spiritual search. If we only had one lifetime to live, then I could not find a logical answer. However, when I came across the concept of reincarnation and karma (perfect cause and effect throughout eternity), everything fell into place.

I began to understand that all of us have created who we are today through thousands of past lives – each filled with countless thoughts, words, and actions. Even the circumstances into which we are born are a direct result of our past. And they are always perfectly just, no matter how it may seem to human eyes.

This is not to say that we should callously accept all the suffering around us and do nothing to help. Understanding karma and reincarnation simply gives us a way of comprehending what is taking place in life. It allows us to be lovingly detached as we find ways to help others in need. If we understand the true pattern of cause and effect, we no longer feel pity or jealousy. Instead, we develop compassion and acceptance.

By faithfully practicing the techniques given in the chapter on spiritual exercises you will receive proof of your previous lifetimes.

To some of us in the Western world, words such as *reincarnation* and *karma* may sound foreign, even today. Let me explain in down-to-earth terms what they entail:

Reincarnation simply means that life does not begin nor end with our current physical bodies. We do not *have* a soul which goes to heaven or hell when we die. We *are* Soul – an atom of God’s love, an eternal being. As Soul, we live many lifetimes in many bodies so that we gain spiritual experience and begin to contribute to the divine plan of life. I will discuss this further in the next chapter, *The Purpose of Creation*.

Karma is simply the principle of cause and effect. It means that whatever we do, say, or think will eventually return to us in some form. In many cases, the length of time between a cause and its effect is so long that we do not connect the two events. This is especially true when the cause took place in a previous lifetime. One of the benefits I have found from practicing daily spiritual exercises is that the gap between cause and effect shortens – the connection between them becomes increasingly obvious. For example, I may become angry with a friend, and two minutes later get a phone call from another friend who is angry with me. This allows me to understand and accept the lesson more quickly.

One of the tremendous benefits of understanding karma and reincarnation is that we no longer believe in victims or villains. Rather, we begin to realize that we have all done the most

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wonderful and the most horrific deeds throughout our many lives. We have *appeared* to be victims at times and villains at others, but these were times when we did not see the chain of cause and effect from other lifetimes. Soul is an atom of love, traveling through eternity. Along the way we play many roles. Some of these roles may be labeled *victims* or *villains*, but they are only temporary masks we wear. Eventually, we learn enough to become partners with God, giving service to all of life.

5. Spiritual Exercises

Throughout history, many forms of prayer and meditation have been used to help us better communicate with God. The spiritual exercises included here are the most effective ones that I have come across.

Active techniques in which we take steps to approach God are usually preferable to passive ones in which we wait for God to come to us. There are three main components to these techniques: light, sound, and imagination.

God speaks to us through light and sound. Together, light and sound make up the Holy Spirit or voice of God. A stream of love issues from the heart of God and flows out to all creation on a wave of light and sound. The light of God is frequently referred to in both Eastern and Western religions. The sound is also mentioned in many spiritual writings. Imagination, properly directed, is the doorway through which we step on our journey home to God. By experimenting with different combinations of light, sound, and imagination in our spiritual exercises, we will discover what works best for each of us.

Many people try to fit themselves to a particular religion or philosophy, but it makes more sense to fit a philosophy or religion to us – to take what we wish from it and leave the rest. So, please experiment with the following techniques in whatever way feels best.

If possible, try to do these exercises at the same time each day. This will build a powerful daily rhythm in your life. Many people prefer first thing in the morning or right before bedtime. If you have some quiet time in the middle of the day, that will work, too.

In this part of the world, we are not used to spending endless hours in meditation. For us, it is best to do the spiritual exercises for 15 to 20 minutes per day. For those who can't manage this, five to ten minutes will do. It is always important to keep a balance in our lives. We must have time for work, leisure, families, friends, and community. In the West, most of us would become unbalanced if we spent long periods of time in prayer or meditation.

In order to begin an exercise, sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Sitting is best if you think you might fall asleep. Focus your attention on the spiritual eye, the point between and slightly above your eyebrows.

The first technique focuses on the voice of God or the sound. There are hundreds of sounds on the various planes, including thunder, violins, buzzing of bees, running water, or a flute.

Begin the exercise by relaxing and taking a few deep breaths. Let go all thoughts of the day and focus your attention on the spiritual eye. Next, fill yourself with love and begin to softly sing the word HU (pronounced *hue*). It is sung on the outgoing breath as follows: HUUUUUU.

HU is an ancient love song to God. It has been used for thousands of years in many cultures

throughout the world. It is perhaps the most uplifting of all sounds. If HU does not work for you, there are other words such as *love* or *God* that you might try.

After two or three minutes of singing HU, stop singing and listen for the sound inside you. If nothing happens after a few minutes, return to singing HU. Continue this process for 15 to 20 minutes. If you should hear one of the inner sounds, relax and go wherever it may take you. No harm will come your way, for you are resting in the arms of God.

If you do not experience concrete results immediately, don't be discouraged. The technique will work in time, especially if practiced on a daily basis. In the meantime, the spiritual energy generated from this discipline will begin to have a healing effect on both your dreams and your daily life.

The second technique focuses on the light. Once again, sit or lie down in a comfortable position for a period of 15 to 20 minutes. Relax, take a few deep breaths, and focus your attention on the spiritual eye. Next, gaze obliquely at the inner screen of your mind, watching for the light, but never straining.

The light of God comes in many forms and colors. The more common colors are blue, white, or gold, but it may also come as orange, green, purple, or pink. It is usually the softer shades that are found in the higher planes of existence. The light may first appear in your inner vision as a tiny dot in the middle of a blank screen. Sometimes, it will grow into a brilliant world of illumination that almost blinds you with its beauty.

The third spiritual exercise is to work with the imagination. Once again, close your eyes and focus on the inner screen. Imagine yourself in the most beautiful surroundings you have ever known: a virgin forest, a sunlit meadow, a windswept ocean beach, a majestic mountain top, a desert at dawn, or a sky filled with brilliant stars. Take note of all the details: sensations of touch, taste, and smell as well as seeing and hearing. Explore the world that you have created. Have an adventure!

At first, you may feel that what you are experiencing is only imagination. Perhaps it is in the beginning, but imagination is the gateway to out-of-body and dream travel. Anything we can imagine already exists somewhere in the inner worlds. Imagination is a divine gift that God has given us. That which we hold in our imagination will be drawn into our lives, especially if there is a strong feeling accompanying it. Many people find that with practice, what begins as imagination suddenly becomes a completely real spiritual experience. This may take the form of a particularly lucid dream or even out-of-body travel.

A variation of this technique is to imagine traveling forward or backward through time in order to gain a better perspective of our lives in the present.

You can also imagine floating out of your physical body and hovering near the ceiling of the room. From there, you can explore the rest of the house or surrounding area. Pay attention to details and use as many of your five senses as possible.

If you are having difficulties with a particular situation, you may wish to try the *Snowball Technique*: Imagine standing on the banks of a broad, fast-flowing river that stretches to the horizon. The river is filled with warm, golden, light and sound. Now take your difficulties and

imagine packing them into a snowball. Make sure that you have included all aspects of the situation. When this is done, throw the snowball into the river and watch it slowly dissolve as the current carries it away. When the last of the snowball has melted in the current, say “Thank you, God. I leave it all in your hands.” Repeat this technique as often as necessary when problems keep coming back to disturb you. Eventually, your troubles will disappear completely.

For those of you who are practical in nature, the following technique may be of interest: If you have a question about some aspect of your life, write it down on a piece of paper and place it in a drawer. Do this whenever you feel the need. Then, pay attention to anything in your dreams or daily life which seems to stand out or provide an answer to your questions. This could happen in words, images, or symbols. Check your drawer at regular intervals to see how your questions have been answered.

For a more immediate answer, you may choose a favorite book that deals with a spiritual subject. Hold the question in your mind, open the book at random, and read what it says. In many cases, the passage you read will provide clues which help to answer your question.

Daily life can also be a spiritual exercise if we look for ways to give divine love and service to others. These words or actions should be given freely with no thought of reward. If possible, don't tell anyone what you have said or done – simply give for the joy of giving. This helps tremendously in keeping our hearts open to love.

A journal is a helpful addition to these techniques. Journals can be used to record thoughts and feelings from daily life, dreams, or spiritual exercises.

The exercises given here can be mixed and matched in an endless variety of ways. As we grow spiritually, we begin to discover which combination of elements suits us best and we discover that this changes as time goes by.

These techniques should never be used to change the lives of others. If you wish to help friends or family, visualize them in the arms of God or simply send them divine love, but never ask God for anything specific. After all, God knows better than we do what needs to be done!

Finally, spiritual guides play an important role in our lives whether or not we are aware of them. Chapter 8, *Spiritual Guides* (page 22), explains the tremendous advantages and possible pitfalls of seeking guidance from others. Because these guides often work closely with us during spiritual exercises, Chapter 8 is an essential companion to this one.

40. Sex and Sexuality

Sex and sexuality are perhaps the most talked about topics of our time. Yet they are almost never viewed from a spiritual point of view.

Many people think that spirituality and sex are completely unrelated topics. This is largely because we often associate spirituality with mainstream religion. Many religions have dogma that denies or restricts human sexuality, but from a spiritual standpoint, sex is simply a part of life.

Let's begin with one simple fact: People have sex for more reasons than simple procreation. If this were not so, we would only have an urge to mate once a year like some species of animals. The sex urge in humans is complex and multifaceted. In its highest form, we use sex to share love, warmth, tenderness, passion, playfulness, trust, and commitment.

In lower forms of sex, people selfishly ignore their partners' needs, use sex as a weapon for power and control, or even perform acts of violence such as child abuse or rape.

Interestingly, a major cause of sexual abuse is a denial of normal, healthy, sexual activity. If we come to know ourselves as spiritual beings, we will have little need to indulge in the darker aspects of sexuality. But when we suppress our normal sexuality with feelings of guilt or shame, our natural tendencies often transform into socially unacceptable behavior.

Here is the paradox: If we were not being constantly told that sex is dirty by mainstream religions, sexual aberrations would all but cease to exist. Violent sex crimes would almost completely disappear if people accepted their normal, healthy sexuality.

Sex is the most physically intimate bond that we can have with another. It affects us emotionally as well as physically. During sex, a certain amount of karma is exchanged between partners. The amount of karma and the form it takes depend on the people involved and the agreement they've made, but the notion of casual sex with no karma is a myth.

When a relationship ends, the karma between the two people is not complete until nothing but goodwill remains between them. This may happen right away, but it usually takes weeks, months, or years; occasionally, it even takes lifetimes. For those who are sincere about their spiritual growth, much of the karma can be worked out through dreams

Many difficulties can be avoided when we first enter a sexual relationship by clearly communicating our desires and expectations with our partner. Many sexual relationships involve a lot of game playing. It is the game playing rather than the sex that often creates problems. Honesty and integrity are key elements in good relationships of all kinds.

Sex is neither good nor bad. It is simply a part of life. It is how we *use* it that makes it uplifting or destructive. If consenting adults enter into an open and honest sexual relationship in which no one is hurt, then no spiritual law is broken.

The topic of masturbation is worth mentioning here. Although masturbation is seldom discussed openly, it remains the most accessible sexual outlet for people who do not have a regular partner. Woody Allen has a terrific attitude when he writes, "Don't knock masturbation.

It's sex with someone I love!"

The word "masturbation" might be translated from other languages as "self-pleasuring." This is a wonderfully accurate way of describing it. Although it is not a complete substitute for sex with a partner, it is nonetheless a great way of releasing and balancing sexual energy and giving love to ourselves.

The subject of homosexuality is also an important one to discuss from a spiritual perspective. We are all Soul, an atom of God's love that is neither male nor female. As we reincarnate through thousands of lifetimes, we take on both male and female bodies. Sometimes we have more male energy; sometimes the female energy is dominant. In our present lifetime, there are men and women with a lot of female energy, men and women with a lot of male energy, and men and women who are somewhere in the middle. Most women have more female energy and most men have more male energy, but this is not always true.

The amount of male or female energy we have brought with us from previous lives often influences our sexual orientation in this life. For instance, a woman with a recent, significant past life as a man, may well end up becoming sexually attracted to women in this lifetime.

It's important to note that no one is completely heterosexual or homosexual. People may label themselves "straight," "gay," or "bisexual," but in truth, we are all somewhere in between. Most of us are closer to being heterosexual, probably to ensure procreation of the species. Yet almost everyone has had at least some same-sex fantasies. From a spiritual perspective this makes perfect sense. We all have memories and feelings from thousands of lifetimes as both men and women.

We are all sexual as well as sensual beings. Most of us feel good touching and being touched, whether it is through making love, hugging, or even shaking hands. If we can acknowledge the full range of sexual and sensual pleasures that life has to offer, we will stop being afraid of our own sexuality. In doing so, we will stop judging others who have a sexual orientation different from our own. One of the signs of spiritual growth is that we can live our lives fully and allow others to do the same. Divine love, not judgment and fear, is a measure of spiritual growth.

It is important to maintain equilibrium in every part of life. Overindulgence in sex or total abstinence (including masturbation) are indications of spiritual instability. That said, we are all different, and we each need to find a healthy balance in our lives. To be complete spiritual beings in this world, we must learn to accept and love ourselves in every way – spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, and sexually.

About the Author

Michael Manning is a freelance writer who lives in British Columbia, Canada with his wife, Karen, and a forever changing number of cats and dogs. He has a degree in psychology and creative writing and has worked at a number of jobs while pursuing his writing career. Since the 1970s, Mr. Manning has had a profound and passionate interest in spirituality. He has read extensively and attended hundreds of conferences, seminars, and workshops on spiritual topics, sometimes as a featured speaker. Most importantly, he has discovered a wealth of spiritual truth through the daily practice of the spiritual exercises given in this book.

Mr. Manning is the author of three film scripts, an autobiography, a documentary video, and dozens of articles, stories, poems, and songs.